

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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DOE TO OMB: "YOU HAVE NOT PROVIDED RESOURCES TO ENABLE US" TO PROTECT NUCLEAR WEAPONS MATERIALS

**Lawmaker releases letter in which DOE complains it lacks funds,
admits nuclear security inadequacies**

Washington, D.C. – Today Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior Member of the Energy and Commerce Committee and co-chair of the Bipartisan Task Force on Nonproliferation, released letters to President Bush and DOE Secretary Spencer Abraham regarding the recent decision of the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to reject DOE's request for additional funds to increase DOE's emergency response capabilities and improve safeguards and security at DOE nuclear sites.

"The Administration has requested almost \$8 billion for missile defense which won't do anything to prevent suicidal terrorists from attacking nuclear facilities and blowing up dirty bombs or homemade nuclear weapons," said Rep. Markey. But when DOE finally admits that security is not what it should be, OMB refuses to help."

Ten DOE sites, some of which are located in urban areas such as Denver, Colorado and the Bay Area of California, reportedly contain enough weapons-grade plutonium and highly enriched uranium to build a crude atomic bomb. There have been reports that Al Qaeda members view U.S. nuclear sites as attractive terrorist targets.

On January 23, 2002, Rep. Markey sent a letter (as yet unanswered) to DOE Secretary Abraham regarding the adequacy of security at DOE facilities. In response, DOE's General John Gordon issued a press release stating that "allegations that the Department of Energy has lax security at its nuclear weapons facilities are false and misleading," that "we aggressively protect our people, facilities, and materials, and we display a formidable security posture to potential attackers," and that "nuclear material is not at risk at Department of Energy facilities." General Gordon wrote a similar letter to the editor of the Washington Post on February 16, 2002.

On March 14, 2002, DOE requested supplemental funds from OMB to improve safeguards and security at DOE facilities. That request was rejected. On March 28, Bruce M. Carnes of DOE sent a letter to Mr. Marcus Peacock at OMB expressing DOE's disappointment that OMB rejected its budget request, and stated that OMB did not even give the DOE the opportunity to discuss its concerns prior to being refused the additional funds. OMB reportedly told DOE that the reason for the refusal was that "the revised Design Basis Threat, the document that outlines the basis for physical security measures, has not been completed." However, according to the March 28, 2002 letter, DOE is "not operating, nor can it operate, under the pre-September 11 Design Basis Threat. Until that is revised, we must operate under Interim Implementing Guidance, and you have not provided resources to enable us to do so."

Rep. Markey's letter to the President requests his immediate assistance in ensuring that these funds are included in the supplemental budget request, and that he ensures that the security of DOE's nuclear weapons facilities becomes and remains a high priority for the Administration. Rep. Markey's letter to DOE requests clarification of General Gordon's statements that security at DOE facilities is adequate in light of the DOE request that the security budget be increased and subsequent follow-up letter from DOE to OMB indicating that security is not being funded at adequate levels.

Copies of all correspondence can be found on Rep. Markey's website at http://www.house.gov/markey/iss_terrorism.htm

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